

In the claims:

The claims are as follows (shown assuming entry of the amendment received 28 April 2004, but further amended here to correct four typographical errors in the response received by the Office on 28 April 2004).

1. (Previously presented) A method of billing, by a third party, for access by a consumer to information made available by a vendor over a computer network, with the billing based on how long the consumer elects to access the information, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) when a consumer visits a vendor network address and decides to purchase access to information made available over the computer network by the vendor, having the consumer exercise a third-party link that will connect the consumer to the third party;
- b) having the third party provide to the consumer an exercisable start-session link for starting access to the information; and
- c) having the third party both begin timing access and redirect the consumer to the information if the consumer exercises the start-session link;

wherein the third-party link and the start-session link are links on respective pages for presentation to the consumer by a browser hosted by equipment operated by the consumer.

2. (Previously presented) A method of billing a consumer for access for a limited time to information made available by a vendor, the access provided over a computer network, the method requiring participation by a third party to mediate between the consumer and the vendor, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) having the vendor establish an account with the third party and provide to the third party a session connect address that is an address on the computer network of the information made available by the vendor;
- b) having the third party provide the vendor with a start session address that is an address on the computer network of the third party to which the vendor is to direct a consumer to start timing access by the consumer to the information made available by the vendor;
- c) having the vendor make available over the computer network a pricetag link that will connect a prospective consumer with the third party;
- d) if the consumer exercises the pricetag link, having the third party return to the consumer a pricetag page that includes a price-per-unit time for access to the information made available for access by the vendor, a maximum duration of access for which the consumer is authorized, and a link to the start session address, which is an address of the third party;
- e) if the consumer exercises the link to the start session address, having the third party return to the consumer an end session link, which the consumer can use to terminate the purchase of access to information from the vendor earlier than waiting for the maximum duration of access to expire, and an authentication code;
- f) also if the consumer exercises the link to the start session address, having the third party provide to the vendor the consumer authentication code and the consumer address, and begin billing the consumer beginning when the consumer exercised the start session link;

- g) having the vendor provide to the consumer a page, located at the session connect address of the vendor, that provides an access link to the information made available by the vendor;
- h) if the consumer exercises the access link, having the vendor provide access to the information until either the maximum duration expires, or the consumer exercises the end session link; and
- i) if the consumer exercises the end session link, which redirects the consumer to the third party, having the third party notify the vendor that the consumer access is terminated, and having the third party stop billing the consumer;

wherein the pricetag link and the link to the start session address are links on respective pages for presentation to the consumer by a browser hosted by equipment operated by the consumer.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein when the consumer accesses the network address of the vendor, the vendor transmits to the consumer a page with the pricetag link that provides enough information to the consumer for the consumer to decide whether to look further into purchasing information from the vendor.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the third party redirects the consumer to link to the vendor and in so linking passes to the vendor the consumer authorization code and consumer address as parameters of the link.

5. (Previously presented) A method of billing a consumer for access for a limited time to information made available by a vendor, the access provided over a computer network, the method

requiring participation by a third party to mediate between the consumer and the vendor, the method comprising the steps of:

having the vendor establish an account with the third party and provide to the third party a session connect address that is an address on the computer network of the information made available by the vendor;

having the third party provide the vendor with a start session address that is an address on the computer network of the third party to which the vendor is to direct a consumer to start timing access by the consumer to the information made available by the vendor;

having the vendor make available over the computer network a pricetag link that will connect a prospective consumer with the third party; and

having the third party start timing access based on the consumer exercising a start-session link made available by the third party for linking the consumer to the start session address;

wherein the pricetag link and the start-session link are links on respective pages for presentation to the consumer by a browser hosted by equipment operated by the consumer.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 5, further comprising a step in which the third party stops timing access based on the consumer having exceeded a maximum duration of access to the information.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 5, further comprising a step in which the third party stops timing access to the information when the consumer exercises an end-session link that redirects the consumer to the third party.

8. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step in which the third party stops timing access to the information based on a maximum duration of access to the information.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step in which the third party provides a ~~start~~ an end session address for use by the consumer in signalling to the third party to stop timing access to the information.

10. (Currently amended) A system for billing, by a third party, for access by a consumer to information made available by a vendor over a computer network, with the billing based on how long the consumer continues to access the information, the system comprising:

a vendor server having a vendor network address on the computer network, and including means for providing an exercisable ~~pricetag~~ third-party link for connecting equipment operated by the consumer to a server operated by the third party and connected to the computer network; and

the third party server, for initiating billing and connecting the consumer equipment to a location accessible over the computer network where the information made available by the vendor resides, and including means for providing an exercisable start-session link by which the consumer indicates the consumer has begun access of the information made available by the vendor, and also means by which to initiate timing access by the consumer to the information made available by the vendor if the consumer exercises the start-session link;

wherein the third-party link and the start-session link are links on respective pages for presentation to the consumer by a browser hosted by equipment operated by the consumer.

11. (Currently amended) A system for billing as in ~~claim 8~~claim 10, wherein the third party server includes means for providing to the consumer an end session address for use by the consumer in ending access to the information by linking the consumer equipment to the end session address, and also includes means by which to terminate timing access to the information if the consumer links to the end session address.

12. (Currently amended) A system for billing as in ~~claim 8~~claim 10, wherein the third party server includes means for stopping timing access to the information based on the consumer having exceeded a maximum duration of access to the information.

13. (New) A method of billing, by a third party, for access over a computer network by a consumer operating consumer equipment to information made available over the computer network by a vendor, the vendor and the third party operating respective servers connected to the computer network each of which servers has a network address, the method comprising the steps of:

the vendor server presenting to the consumer an exercisable third-party link for connecting the consumer to the third party server; and

the third party server presenting to the consumer equipment an exercisable start-session link for use by the consumer in starting timed access to the information and also for use by the third party as a signal for starting to time access to the information, and the third party server directing the consumer equipment to a location where the information resides if the consumer exercises the start-session link;

wherein the third-party link and the start-session link are links on respective pages for presentation to the consumer by a browser hosted by equipment operated by the consumer.